

PZ 7
.P771
Cs
Copy 1

FT MEADE
GenColl

XMAS IN SPAIN



Merry Xmas.



Mariquita's Day of Rejoicing



Class PZ7

Book P771 C

Copyright N^o

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.





Christmas in Spain

or

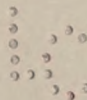
Mariquita's Day of Rejoicing

BY

SARAH GERTRUDE POMEROY

ILLUSTRATED

By BERTHA D. HOXIE



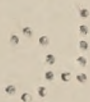
BOSTON
DANA ESTES & COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

RZ
RFO

Copyright, 1910
BY DANA ESTES & COMPANY

—
All rights reserved

CHRISTMAS IN SPAIN



Electrotyped and Printed by
THE COLONIAL PRESS
C. H. Simonds & Co., Boston, U. S. A.

© Cl. A 268127

orig. Nov. 9, 1910.

CHRISTMAS IN SPAIN

OR

MARIQUITA'S DAY OF REJOICING

“IF your mother is willing, I will take you for a walk with me,” said Señor Vasquez, smiling indulgently at his twin son and daughter. Anita clapped her hands in delight as she ran after Antonio in search of their mother. They found her in the *despensa*, the store-house of many delicious dainties, as she was busy giving out the supplies for the holiday supper that evening. She followed them into the patio, however, and gave them the desired permission. “It’s such a busy day,” she said to their father, “that I am quite willing to spare them for the afternoon and a walk with you will be a great treat.”



They made a pretty picture as they went down the narrow street, stopping once to wave their hands to the dark-eyed young mother who watched them from behind the barred windows of their quaint old house. More than one passer-by glanced after them half-enviously, for the erect young military

man with his little son and daughter on either side was good to look upon, and their merry laughter was contagious.

To tell the truth light hearts were not plentiful in old Seville that December day, for within the year the war with America had drained the resources of Spain and many people mourned for soldiers dead 'neath Cuban skies.

But there was great rejoicing in the home of Señor Vasquez, for the father of the household had gone through the fierce campaign without injury, and although his term of service was not completed, his regiment had already landed in Spain and he had obtained a two weeks' leave of absence for the holidays.



Antonio and Anita were wild with delight when their father came home and had scarcely let him out of their sight since his arrival. Antonio was constantly begging for stories of the war, and Anita listened too, vaguely fascinated, although she shud-

dered sometimes when she thought of the pale, sick soldiers she had seen brought home from those same battle-fields. Her brother was always talking of the time when he should grow up and enter the army. Anita couldn't understand his eagerness; and she wondered if he would have been as anxious, if he had helped her mother make bandages and hospital supplies. She hadn't forgotten the long hours when she had worked patiently, proud to be able to help the soldiers a little, while Antonio was marching and counter-marching with his boy friends. But the

war was over now — Anita drew a sigh of relief as she realized it and clung more tightly to her father's hand.

It was the afternoon of the day before Christmas and the sunny plazas and busy market-places were gay with holiday wares. It seemed as if the whole city were in the streets, for the laborers had all left their work at twelve and a good-natured throng jostled the little party of three.

The children asked for a story this afternoon, so their father turned in the direction of the river and they walked away from the busy crowd towards the Triana bridge. From there they could look up and down the yellow Guadalquivir and fancy they could see again the stately galleons which rode there of old. They were familiar with the traditions of these ships and the cargoes they had brought from over the seas in the days when Seville was a busy port, but they loved to hear them again from their father's lips.

"Where shall we go next?" asked their father when they had spent some moments on the bridge. "I'll give you each a wish. What shall we do, Anita?"

The little girl answered rather shyly. "I was just thinking," she said, "how much I would like to carry some good things for the holiday to the poor sick soldiers in the hospitals."

"Well spoken, my dear, it's a thought worthy of a soldier's daughter," said Señor Vasquez. "And what is your wish, my son?" he asked.

"When we have been to the hospital, may we buy something for Mariquita?" asked Antonio.

"Indeed you may, you shall take her whatever you think will make her most happy," answered their father.

"Oh, I'm so glad," cried Anita. "It was good you thought of it, Antonio. Mariquita was so kind to help me make my nacimiento," she explained to her father. "It certainly was splen-

did," said Señor Vasquez. Anita, pleased with his praise, thought gratefully of the many hours her mother's friend had spent helping her make the plaster representation of the birth of Christ which every Spanish child prepares at Christmas time. Thanks to Mariquita's deft fingers, the little figures of the Baby, St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin had been fashioned most artistically and Anita might well be proud of her nacimiento.

"First, we will buy whatever you wish to take to the hospital," said Señor Vasquez. They had left the river behind them and were back in the city streets again. Soon they paused in a busy market-place where swarthy peasants were displaying their wares and a crowd of purchasers were buying holiday dainties.

There was such a bewildering display of good things that it was hard to make a selection. The luscious golden oranges of Andalusia were piled high in pyramids and Anita said she wanted some for the soldiers. Antonio suggested that they add some nuts from Granada and the market-man displayed some fresh dates from Tangiers which their father added to their store.

Both children looked longingly at the various sweetmeats, dried and candied, which were shown so invitingly, but their father told them they would not be good for sick people. He bought some turmi, however, and laughed with the salesman at the children's delight when he had the parcel of this favorite Christmas candy wrapped separately for their own use.

The shops were decorated with ribbons and streamers, while all kinds of wares were given a holiday air by their decorations. Even the sausages were gaily displayed and the folds of red and yellow serge which the peasant women buy gave an added note of color.

There was laughter and gay talk. Sometimes a dark-eyed girl danced gracefully while she tossed her tambourine, and in other places the low monotonous scraping of the zambomba



accompanied the strains of the Christmas hymn with its familiar old refrain.

“This night is the good night,
And therefore is no night of rest.”

Soon they came to the hospital where the children had frequently been with their mother. The portress who opened the door for them seemed to know their errand without being told and held out her hands for their gifts. The children could see many baskets of fruit and flowers in the corridor behind her. She recognized them at once and told Señor Vasquez that she had just sent a messenger for him. A sick soldier had been asking for him and would like to see him at once.

Antonio and his sister were told to wait for their father in the courtyard, and he immediately followed a sweet-faced nun down the long corridor to the wards.

Left alone, the children amused themselves by watching the doorway, for the portress was kept busy admitting visitors. Some had come to visit their sick friends, but many people came to leave fruit and gifts as the children had done.

“What shall we buy for Mariquita?” said Antonio suddenly.

Anitia shook her head doubtfully. “I am afraid there is nothing she cares for very much except to have Don Francisco back again,” she said. “What do you suppose has become of him?”

“I don’t wonder Mariquita is sad,” answered her brother. “It is so long since she has had any word from him.”

They were both very fond of the young girl who had been “*en deposito*” with their mother for several months, and they were greatly interested in her sad love-story which was no secret in the family. They knew that Mariquita’s lover, Don Francisco, had gone to Cuba with his regiment, and that in his

absence her parents had tried to force her to marry an old man who was very rich but whom Mariquita hated.

So she had taken advantage of the Spanish law and, having signed a document stating the facts, had been placed by the magistrate "*en deposito*" with Señora Vasquez. It was that good lady's duty to care for her and protect her until her parents had time to relent. If they did not agree to allow her to marry Don Francisco at the end of the appointed time, she was free to do so without her parents' consent according to Spanish law.

Señora Vasquez had found Mariquita a great comfort while her husband was away, and the children had grown to love her dearly, but the poor girl was often sad. She had heard nothing from Don Francisco for many weeks, and her parents had tried to convince her that he was dead. Still she refused to believe them and would not return home or marry as they wished.

"If only Don Francisco would come back for Christmas," cried Anita. "I can think of nothing which would make Mariquita happy except that."

"What do you suppose the sick soldier wanted?" said Antonio, to change the subject, for tender-hearted Anita's eyes were filled with tears of sympathy.

"He wanted to tell me some news that will help us to make Mariquita happy," answered their father's voice. He had come up behind them and had heard both questions.

"Come with me quickly, for we have no time to lose." The children questioned him eagerly as they hurried along together, and he told them all the soldier had said.

The sick man had been in Don Francisco's regiment, and many nights, by the side of the camp-fire, they had exchanged stories of their home and loved ones. Don Francisco had confided to him how he longed to return to Spain and marry his Mariquita, but the weeks had lengthened into months and still their orders



to return had been delayed. When, at length, they landed at Cadiz Don Francisco had heard of Mariquita's plight and, impatient of the endless formalities and delays which were more than a lover's impatience could endure, he had left the army without leave and started for Seville. But he had been captured and imprisoned, for such an infringement of military discipline was always severely punished.

His comrade had sent for Señor Vasquez and told him the story, thinking that the news of her lover's whereabouts might cheer Mariquita.

"But you must not tell her, children," cautioned their father. "She would be distressed to know that he is in prison. Do not let her know that we have heard any news for a little time. Meanwhile, I will see what I can do."

He had just finished speaking, when they stopped at an imposing-looking building which their father said was the headquarters of the military governor. The guard at the entrance saluted, as they passed, and none of the soldiers prevented their advance. Antonio felt very proud of this evidence of their father's importance, for even the door-keeper at the governor's office seemed to recognize that the handsome young officer was a person of authority and, very soon, they had permission to enter.

The governor greeted Señor Vasquez most cordially and spoke pleasantly to the children when their father explained that his business was so urgent that he had been unable to take them home, before making his call.

Antonio's eyes were fastened admiringly on his splendid uniform, but Anita saw that his eyes were kind, and she felt sure that he would help Mariquita, when he knew about her trouble.

Both children knew that it was the custom to pardon many prisoners on Christmas Day, and they suspected what their father's request would be.

First Señor Vasquez asked for the records of Don Francisco's regiment and found that the soldier's story was not only true, but that his friend had been transferred to a military prison in their own city. All this he showed to the governor, telling the story he had just heard and explaining about Mariquita.

The governor looked very grave and sat thinking silently for several minutes after Señor Vasquez had ceased speaking. Then he said, "It is our custom, as you know, to visit all the soldier-prisoners on *noche-buena* and to pardon all those who are in gaol for light offences. But Don Francisco's offence is not a light one, and I fear it would not do to overlook it."

The twins had been sitting very quietly in the corner, but at the governor's words, Antonio forgot his awe of the great man and interrupted him. "Oh, sir," he said, "couldn't you pardon him for Mariquita's sake? She has worked so hard making bandages and packing comforts for the soldiers." "I've heard her say many times that, in spite of all her suffering, she would send Don Francisco to war again, if Spain needed him," added Anita shyly.

Their father and the governor were both startled, for they had quite forgotten the children in the interests at stake. Now the governor smiled encouragingly. "Suppose you tell me about Mariquita and what you have done at home during these months of warfare," he said quite kindly.

Thus encouraged, the children did not lack for words and they told about their friend very enthusiastically. When they had finished, the governor glanced at their father with an amused smile. "It certainly would be a shame to keep such a patriotic young woman waiting any longer for her soldier-lover," he said. "After all," he added, "although it is true that Don Francisco's offence is not a light one, there are circumstances which explain the case. His war-record is such a good one that



I think we may safely pardon him.” As he spoke, he reached for pen and paper, and in a few moments had signed and sealed an official-looking document which he handed to Señor Vasquez. The children thanked him very politely, but they could hardly restrain their impatience until they found themselves in the street again.

When their father told them that it was really true and that the paper was indeed Don Francisco’s pardon, Anita danced for very happiness.

“But you must not tell Mariquita,” cautioned their father. “We will let her lover tell the good news, himself.” So the children promised to keep the secret carefully and not spoil the surprise he had in store for her.

They stopped on the way home to buy some great bunches of scarlet geranium and masses of heliotrope for their mother, for in the warm climate of southern Spain these blossoms answer the purpose of Christmas holly and mistletoe. They bought Mariquita a flagon of cologne for Anita remembered that she was very fond of the fragrant toilet-water, smelling of orange-blossoms which is manufactured in their own city. But, as Antonio said quite truly, it didn’t make much difference what they carried her when her best gift was still in store for her.

At last they were at home again and the children scampered through the delicately wrought iron gates which separated their home from the street, across the marble patio, or courtyard with its silvery fountain in the centre, up the stairs to the winter living-rooms. For, in Seville, the people live up-stairs in the winter and move down-stairs in the summer, when they wish to be cooler.

The children were left alone with Mariquita while their father and mother talked together in another room. They knew that Señor Vasquez was telling his wife about their adventures, and

they had hard work to keep the good news from Mariquita when she questioned them about their walk. She thanked them for the cologne and listened to their account of buying presents for the sick soldiers, but although she smiled bravely, they could see that she was unhappy, and tender-hearted little Anita pitied her so genuinely that she had to run away lest she should tell the great secret.

Their father went out again soon and their mother told them quietly that he had gone to the prison to secure Don Francisco's liberty. Of course they were very impatient for his arrival, but soon their aunts and uncles and all the family relatives began to gather for the Christmas Eve supper which is always a gala event. There were no outside guests, except Mariquita, for this evening festivity is purely a family affair.

When their father returned, the supper was served, and it seemed as if the jollity was at its height when Dolores their good old ayo (nurse) appeared to take them to bed. It was very hard to leave the lights and flowers and smiling faces, but neither of the children objected, for they had been promised a great treat if they would go early to bed. For the first time in their lives they were going to the "Misa del Gallo" or "Cock-crow Mass" which is universally celebrated throughout Spain, at midnight, on Christmas Eve.

But Anita was not at all sleepy, and she begged Dolores to tell her some stories of her own childhood until she could fall asleep. So good-natured Dolores told her some of the quaint customs which were still practised in her old home, a little old-fashioned town in southern Andalusia.

"Did you go to the 'Misa del Gallo' when you were as little as I am?" inquired Anita. The little girl was quite impressed by the distinction she enjoyed.

"Yes, I was just your age when I went for the first time," said

Dolores. "I well remember the gorgeous procession when the beautiful Señora Juanita, our mistress, went to church with my father and all her other men-servants going in procession before her. Each one played a different instrument and I thought the sight was splendid."

"Oh, will they do that to-night?" cried the little girl in excitement. Dolores laughed at the idea and told her that there were too many grand ladies in Seville to keep up such a custom. It is only practised in little towns where there is only one noble family.

"I remember another custom, too," she said thoughtfully, as she stroked Anita's soft black hair. "In my little village there was no room in any house without its picture of the Saviour, and there was hardly a maiden who did not kneel before her picture of the Babe on noche-buena and hope to see His Mother. For they say that the Virgin visits every house where she can find a picture of her Son, on Christmas Eve, and brings blessings in her train."

"I have a picture of the Babe, right here in my room," murmured little Anita drowsily.

"Oh, Anita, Anita, you do not need her kind blessing as much as I do," said a sweet voice brokenly, as Mariquita buried her face in the pillow by the sleeping child. Then it was good Dolores' turn to comfort the lonely girl who had stolen away from the gay family party and had been sitting in the darkness listening to the stories of old-world Spain.



It seemed only a few moments to Anita, but it was really more than three hours later when she woke from her long nap. For a moment she lay still in her little white bed wondering why she should waken with such a strange feeling of anticipation in what seemed the middle of the night. Then she saw Mariquita kneeling in the moonlight with her face upturned towards the picture of Mary and her Babe which hung on Anita's wall.

The little girl remembered everything at once — the stories



that Dolores had told her and the sadness of Mariquita's heart. Then she forgot all else in her longing to comfort the sweet girl, who had been so kind to her. She slipped softly out of bed and, running noiselessly across the floor, put her arms around Mariquita's neck. At the gentle embrace, the girl looked up half-startled, almost believing that the old legend

had come true and that the Virgin had really come. But Anita kissed her before she could speak.

"Oh, Mariquita," she said, "you heard Dolores' story, I know you did. But don't be sorry because it is only I, for the Virgin has sent you her blessing, indeed she has."

The girl caught the child in her arms. "Little comfort," she murmured.

Just at that moment the soft tinkle of a guitar commenced

beneath their window and the sound of a man's rich voice in song.

“This night is the good night,
And therefore is no night of rest.”

The words were the familiar lines of the Christmas song which the children had heard in the streets, but the voice was more familiar still to Mariquita. She gave a low glad cry and ran to the window. One look below and she had turned to run swiftly down the stairs to the summer apartment on the lower floor, where she could stretch out her hand to her lover between the bars that guarded the casement. For it was indeed Don Francisco who had returned at last.

Anitia told Antonio all about it while their mother and Dolores were making them ready. They were both so excited that they could hardly drink the warm chocolate which had been prepared for them, and they were quite wide awake when it was time to start for the cathedral.

Through the patio and out into the narrow street went the family party, Mariquita the happiest of all. The children had passed through the same streets many times, but they seemed unfamiliar in the semi-darkness with their glimpses of lighted houses through uncurtained windows and across deserted patios. The sound of many feet, all hastening in the same direction, reëchoed through the streets, and the murmur of many voices rose on the midnight air.

Antonio and Anita had visited the cathedral often in the day-time, but they had never been there at night. It seemed like a strange wonderful place when they first caught sight of it beneath the starry sky, in the shadow of the Giralda — that beautiful square tower built by the Moors so many centuries ago. It seemed to them that the Santa Maria and the other

bronze bells in the ancient belfry pealed more joyfully than usual.

Within the cathedral it was all more wonderful still. The twinkling lights glimmered on painted frescos and sculptured saints and penetrated the mysterious shadows of the aisles. Thousands of candles blazed on the high altar, scores of priests and acolytes went noiselessly to and fro while, now and then, the tinkle of the golden mass-bells sounded overhead.

Then the celebrated twin organs pealed forth, softly at first, then louder and still louder, answering each other and joining in chorus in the glad paeon of the *Adeste Fideles*, the ancient Christmas hymn of the church. Sad hearts were lightened and sorrow was forgotten, for in that glad and triumphant song the poorest and the richest alike rejoiced.

The great congregation did not seem strange to the children, for they were used to seeing nuns and gypsies, matadors and noble gentlemen, kneel side by side in the vast cathedral. In all the multitude there was no happier heart than Mariquita's. Although she followed the service devoutly, her eyes were constantly seeking those of the bronzed young soldier who knelt in the shadow of a near-by column, and the folds of her lace mantilla framed a radiant face.

When the service was over, the family party separated at the cathedral door and the children walked home with their parents and Mariquita. It seemed strange to go to bed again for the second time in one evening, but, this time, neither Antonio nor Anita needed any story-telling to put them to sleep. The whole household was soon quiet, and when the watchman went his rounds a little later not one of them heard his cry, —

“Ave Maria purissima; las dos; y sereno.”

It was late on Christmas morning when they were awakened by the warm sunshine streaming into the uncurtained windows.



Bertha D. Hoxie

There was a slight chill in the air, but the palms and orange trees in the patio were green as summer foliage and the skies were clear and blue. The children thought it was perfect Christmas weather, for, though the distant Sierras were snow-capped, they were not used to the ice and snow in winter which is common in the northern part of their country.

They had no gifts nor did they expect any, for Spanish children wait until the Feast of the Three Kings in January for their presents. They took great pleasure, however, in the gifts they made to others. They had a little present prepared for each house servant, and when they sat down to breakfast they found several little verses headed "A Happy Christmas" which had been left by humble petitioners who hoped to be remembered at the Christmas season. Señora Vasquez was used to such appeals, and she had a number of little gifts waiting for the children to distribute.

Anitia watched for the postman, of whom she was very fond, and gladly ran to present his gift. Antonio was quite as eager to remember his friend the newsboy, and there were many others whom they were pleased to make happy. It seemed such a pleasant way to spend Christmas morning and the time of gift-giving passed too quickly.

There were other visitors, also, whose coming added to the excitement of the day. Young Señor Vasquez had several tenants and, according to tradition, all these must come to greet him and bring their rent on Christmas morning. Very few brought money, but one presented a barrel of grapes, another a cask of finest olive-oil, and funniest of all were the peasants from the country who brought their offerings in the form of live pigs and turkeys. Of course each one was received most politely, given a Christmas box and sent away content.

Then came the midday luncheon which the children had been

anticipating. There was almond soup and truffled turkey with roasted chestnuts and Spanish sweetmeats. In fact they had all the good things that were appropriate to Christmas Day, and nothing was lacking to make their holiday meal complete.

After the afternoon siesta, it was time for another walk, and this time both their parents went with them for a stroll under the elms of the beautiful Alameda, a street which is lined with splendid palaces on either side. Everybody was out for a promenade and they met many friends. Then they continued their walk in the gardens of the Alcazar, the beautiful palace of which all Seville is proud. Here their father told them more stories of the building of the palace in the days when the Moors held Seville as their own, by means of the heavy fortified walls which have long since fallen in ruins. But the children preferred the tales of their own people and made him tell other stories of the beautiful Queen Isabella who once held court there. Antonio and Anita were home-loving children and they thought no city in the world could be more beautiful than their own sunny Seville.

The hours passed too quickly. It seemed to the children that the day was only fairly begun when the afternoon shadows began to lengthen and their walk was over. When they reached home, they found Mariquita impatient to tell them her good news. She said she was the happiest girl in all Seville, for her parents had relented and she was going home to be formally betrothed to Don Francisco. In fact she was quite ready to go and was only waiting to bid them good-bye.

It was hard to have her leave them and Anita could scarcely keep back the tears when she thought that Mariquita would not live with them any longer. But she smiled again at the prospect of the wedding in the near future, for Mariquita declared that

Don Francisco's brave little "defensores" should be numbered first among her wedding guests.

So the Christmas Day ended happily for all, and two tired children were glad when nightfall came.

"It's only a week until New Year's," said Anita, "and then Mariquita will be a bride."

"And in another week comes the Feast of the Three Kings," said her brother. "You know that is the day that the Wise Men pass by on their way to visit the Christ-child. We mustn't forget to put some straw in our shoes and place them outside where the Magi's horses can see them."

"Of course we won't forget," answered his sister, reproachfully, "for you know, Antonio, I think the happiest part of our holiday has been when we were making gifts to others."

And with this wise little speech, Anita said good-night rather sleepily, quite unconscious that she had found the secret of real Christmas happiness which so many seek in vain.

THE END.

JUL 5 1910

One copy del. to Cat. Div.

NOV 15 1910

16. Res. Storage 1 c. Rejected

JUL 5 1910

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00020722010